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WKU President's Office - Caboni

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There are moments in history so imprinted on us that we can recall where we were and what we were doing when they happened. Today marks the 16th anniversary of one such event: the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

For me, I was a newly minted professor preparing to teach my first weekend course of the semester. My colleagues had gathered around a television in another faculty member's office watching the live coverage on the Today show when the second plane hit. In that moment, we knew something was very wrong and that there would be a tremendous response to that kind of attack. And then the horror, sadness and anger that was the emotional response as the first tower fell.

As devastating as the attacks were, Americans proved resilient in the face of adversity. We've come back stronger than ever. Some claim the painful memories are reminders of how vulnerable our way of life can be. And while a certain vigilance is needed to protect a free and open society, that vigilance should not infringe on our lifestyle by quelling the voices of those who are different.

It is essential that we learn from history and put into practice those lessons we can glean. One of those lessons is the importance of having understanding and compassion.

Differences of opinion are inevitable. We embrace free speech on our campus, but we must learn to disagree without being disagreeable. As I have stated before, hate and bigotry have no place on our campus and will not be tolerated. But a debate of different viewpoints can be healthy, cause us to think outside of our box and give us the opportunity to grow. It can be a catalyst for improvement, both for the individual and for our community.

The WKU experience is about personal development as much as it is intellectual development. I want the students who come to the Hill to leave with a better understanding of the world in which we live and the ability to accept other cultures and viewpoints. As they become alumni, my hope is that they will elevate their communities by being positive influences. We will always be tested with adversity, both natural and manmade. My hope is that all members of the WKU family will be prepared to respond appropriately with grace, compassion and resilience.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy C. Caboni'.

Timothy C. Caboni